

## Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SYE-00 /016 W  
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P R 161317Z SEP 76  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1796  
INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7490

DEPT FOR A/SY/EX; A/SY/FO; KARACHI FOR RSS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, LE

SUBJECT: STATUS OF CHANCERY EXTERNAL SECURITY FORCES

1. AS SY IS AWARE, THE POST HAS BEEN USING THE SERVICES OF THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY (LAA) TO PERFORM EXTERNAL SECURITY DUTIES OUTSIDE OF THE CHANCERY. IN ADDITION, A NUMBER OF THESE SOLDIERS HAVE ACCOMPANIED THE CHIEF OF MISSION ON HIS OFFICIAL CALLS IN WEST BEIRUT. DURING THE LAST FEW WEEKS THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY, AT LEAST IN BEIRUT AREA, IS BEGINNING TO COME APART AS AN EFFECTIVE MILITARY ORGANIZATION. SHOULD THIS DISINTEGRATION BECOME COMPLETE, IT COULD HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT UPON THE SECURITY OF THE CHANCERY AND ITS PERSONNEL.

2. THE CAUSES OF THIS DISINTEGRATION ARE REPORTEDLY POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL. LAA COMMANDER LT. AHMED KHATIB HAS FALLEN OUT WITH LEFTIST LEADER KAMAL JUNBLATT TO THE EXTENT THAT THERE RESPECTIVE GROUPS HAVE SKIRMISHED. FATAH, THE ORIGINAL LAA SUPPORTER, IS EVINCING SERIOUS DISENCHANTMENT AND DISINCLINATION TO PROVIDE FURTHER SUPPORT. KHATIB MAY ALSO BE ATTEMPTING TO ASSUME A ROLE MORE POLITICAL THAN MILITARY IN LEBANON AND AS A RESULT IS LESS INTERESTED IN "HIS ARMY." A NEW LEBANESE ARMY WILL PROBABLY NOT HAVE ANY PLACE FOR LT. KHAOIB. ALSO, OF CONCERN TO HIS SOLDIERS, ARE REPORTS THAT LIBYA, THE MAJOR FOREIGN FINANCIAL SUPPORTER OF  
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THE LAA, IS WITHDRAWING ITS SUPPORT.

3. EVEN PRIOR TO THESE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, THE LAA (AT LEAST THE CHANCERY'S CONTINGENT) HAD BEGUN TO FADE AWAY. WHEN THE REPORTING RSO ARRIVED IN LATE JUNE, THE CHANCERY'S EXTERNAL SECURITY FORCE CONSISTED OF ONE LIEUTENANT, TWO SERGEANTS, NINE CORPORALS AND TEN PRIVATES. IN ADDITION TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS (AK-47/M-16), THEY WERE EQUIPPED WITH A US CALIBER 50 BROWNING HEAVY MACHINEGUN MOUNTED ON A LANDROVER AND AN M-48 TRACK-MOUNTED TWIN 40 MM CANNON. FIRST THE LANDROVER WITH 50 CALIBER WAS REMOVED FOR "OPERATIONAL PURPOSES"; NEXT, "THE TANK" WAS HAULED AWAY FOR REPAIRS AND WEN LAST SEEN COULD NO LONGER RUN AND ONLY ONE OF ITS TWO CANNON'S FUNCTIONED. FINALLY, LAA PERSONNEL HAVE DISAPPEARED TO THE POINT THAT NO MORE THAN SIX TO EIGHT MEN ARE PRESENT AT ANY ONE TIME. AS THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE LAA PLUMETS FURTHER, THE REMAINING SOLDIERS WILL LOSE WHATEVER DETERRENT FORCE THEY HAVE AT PRESENT. IF THE LAA COLLAPSE BECOMES TOTAL, FINAL AND PUBLIC, THE MISSION WILL BE FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF FINDING OR ESTABLISHING AN ALTERNATE EXTERNAL SECURITY FORCE.

5. ALTHOUGH NUMEROUS ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO REORGANIZE A WEST BEIRUT POLICE FORCE, ALL SUCSEFFORTS TO DATE HAVE BEEN NON-STARTERS. ONE ORGANIZATION, THE POPULAR SECURITY FORCES, WHICH HAS NO RELATIONSHIP TO THE FORMER LEBANESE POLICE, IS MADE UP OF GROUPS OF ARMED MEN FROM ALL THE VARIOUS FACTIONS AND PARTIES IN WEST BEIRUT. WHILE THIS ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN

EFFECTIVE IN POLICING TRAFFIC AND ATTEMPTING TO REDUCE BURGLARY AND CAR THEFT, IT IS AT BEST AN INTERIM MEASURE. THE FIRST LOYALTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL GROUPS COMRISING THE ORGANIZATION IS TO THEUJ DUYFERING PARTIES, HOWEVER THIS FORCE HAS SOME SEMBLANCE OF LEGALITY. THERE ALSO EXISTS THE OPTION OF REQUESTING PLO PROTECTION. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE SEVERAL MILITIA GROUPS IN THE VICINITY OF THE CHANCERY WITH WHICH THE RSO HAS ESTABLISHED LIAISON AND THESE GROUPS MAY BE CONFIDENTIAL

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WILLING TO PROVIDE SECURITY. AN APPROACH TO THE ARAB LEAGUE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE FOR SECURITY PROTECTION IS ALSO BEING CONSIDERED.

IF SARKIS, AFTER SEP 23 IS

ABLE TO RECONSTITUTE AN INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE WITH EFFECTIVE CONTROL IN WEST BEIRUT, WE PLAN TO APPROACH THEM FOR EXTERNAL SECURITY PROTECTION.

6. THE FUNCTION OF WHATEVER FORCES ARE PLACED OUTSIDE THE CHANCERY IS DETERRENCE. A HOSTILE FORCE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ATTACK ANOTHER GROUP TO GET TO THE CHANCERY. THEREFORE IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE EXTERNAL SECURITY FORCE THAT THE MISSION CHOOSES BE PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED AND THAT IT HAVE SOME SEMBLANCE OF LEGALITY, AND AS SUCH NOT BE LIGHTLY CROSSED BY HOSTILE GROUPS.

( THE LAA HAS NOT YET FOLDED, AND THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT AT LEAST SOME OF ITS MEMBERS WILL SEEK REINTEGRATION INTO THE REGULAR LEBANESE ARMY AFTER PRESIDENT SARKIS TAKES OVER ON SEP 23. THE EMBASSY IS WATCHING THE SITUATION CLOSELY AND IS CONSIDERING THE VARIOUS OPTIONS OUTLINED ABOVE. WE WOULD WELCOME ANY COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS THE DEPARTMENT MAY HAVE. LANE

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